

NEWS RELEASE
MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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CONTACT: Justin Post, (406) 444-6171

PSC Hires New Chief Legal Counsel

HELENA — The Montana Public Service Commission has promoted a staff attorney to serve as the agency's new chief legal counsel.

Helena resident Justin Kraske, 31, replaces Dennis Lopach who resigned earlier this year. Kraske takes over the position on March 10, supervising the PSC's three full-time attorneys and the agency's consumer assistance staff.

Kraske said he's looking forward to working with the PSC's staff and five commissioners on important energy issues that impact ratepayers and businesses throughout Montana.

"The Commission has a great consumer assistance staff ready to respond to ratepayer inquiries and knowledgeable attorneys who provide legal advice to the Commission as it makes decisions on major utility rate cases and statewide energy issues," he said.

As the agency's chief counsel, Kraske will report directly to commissioners and oversee all legal issues before the agency.

Kraske grew up in the Billings area and attended college at the University of Montana in Missoula. He earned a bachelor's degree in 2004 in business finance with a minor in economics. He earned his law degree from the university in 2007.

Commissioners interviewed candidates from across the country before selecting Kraske as the new chief legal counsel. Commissioners said Kraske's extensive knowledge of regulatory issues, his exemplary work ethic and strong legal, personal, professional and supervisory skills made him the top candidate.

Chairman Bill Gallagher, R-Helena, added that Kraske's experience with the PSC's laws, administrative rules and utilities it regulates "made him the best – and ultimately unanimous – choice of the Commissioners for this important position."

Vice Chairman Bob Lake, R-Hamilton, pointed out that Kraske's promotion comes as the Commission considers three major rate cases filed by NorthWestern Energy, Montana-Dakota Utilities and Mountain Water.

"I'm excited to have Justin as our new chief legal counsel as the PSC works toward deciding these rate cases in the coming months," Lake said. "Hiring someone from within the Commission who is already knowledgeable about these issues will help make for a smooth transition."

Kraske joined the PSC in January 2008 as a staff attorney. He has worked on a variety of cases involving natural gas, transportation, water and telecommunications issues.

Kraske served in 2011 as president of the National Conference of Regulatory Attorneys and is a current member of the staff subcommittee on law with the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, or NARUC. Contact him at 406.444.6376 or jkraske@mt.gov.

For more information, visit psc.mt.gov or contact PSC Communications/Research Director Justin Post at 406.444.6171. Follow the PSC at [Twitter.com/@MT_PSC](https://twitter.com/MT_PSC) or visit Facebook.com/MontanaPSC.